

where the short and less important observations can be set before our fellows; where the progress of investigations can be stated and coöperation asked; where movements for the benefit of botanists (such as the Exchange Club) can be initiated; where the botanists can meet informally and become better acquainted. Such were the objects of its founders, and these features it should be our endeavor to preserve. Any attempt to dignify it by adding formalities or limiting its freedom of speech would only ruin it.

AS IT IS, there is a growing tendency to encroach upon the biological section. The sectional committee this year followed the precedent of the past two years, and arranged the programme so that all the botanical papers were read in the morning, and all the zoological in the afternoon. This year the "cutting" of zoological papers by the botanists was more marked than ever. Hardly a corporal's guard was present in the afternoon. The zoologists, who largely attended in the morning, complained of the desertion, and with justice. We are quite convinced—the conviction has been growing for two years—that the programme should be once more arranged so as to intersperse the papers. Not that botanists should be made to listen to what they don't want to hear, but they should not be invited to desert the section, for they are likely to hear a zoological paper which will be quite as instructive and suggestive as a botanical one.

WE ARE quite unable to account for the fact that in general the Botanical Club was better attended this year than the biological section. The zoölogists were in the minority, both in number of members and number of papers. Very little can be claimed, however, for the quality of the botanical papers. With some exceptions, they showed a narrowness of observation and a superficiality of study which were lamentable. If we may assume the hortative, do let us broaden our conceptions of investigation, and when a subject is undertaken, look it from all sides, study its literature, and bring our observations and experiments to bear upon it in such a way that we reach not *a* conclusion, but *the* conclusion, and the *only* conclusion. If we do not narrow it to *that* point we lose all, and have merely our trouble for our pains.

---

## OPEN LETTERS.

---

Prof. E. Hackel, on the citation of authors.<sup>1</sup>

If Mr. Bentham proposes the reduction of a genus to a section of another without giving a complete list of the changes in nomenclature which results from that alteration, *he is not considered* the author of any combination of names which is made by other persons adopting the reductions. For instance, *Triodia acuminata*, *ambigua*, *mutica*, *stricta*, *Texana*, etc., are no names of Bentham's, because you can never quote a page of his works where these names are to be found.

<sup>1</sup> Extract from a letter addressed to Dr. George Vasey, October, 1883.

On the other hand, are you sure that Mr. Bentham, if examining all the species named above, would maintain them all with the rank of species? Possibly, yes; but you can assert nothing, and therefore you can not attribute such names as *Triodia Texana* to him. \* \* \*

As matters now are we must quote *Triodia Texana* Vasey in "The Grasses," etc., etc. The botanist who seeks this name in your book finds the indication "*Tricuspis Texana* Thurb.," and low he is at a loss where to find more information about that species. The author of *Triodia mutica* is F. L. Scrib. in Bull. Torr. Bot. Club X, p. 30. He is also the author of *Hilaria rigida* (in Bull. Torr. Bot. Club IX, p. 86), not Bentham, who, in Notes on Gram., p. 62, mentions only *H. cenchroides*, *H. Jamesii*, *H. mutica*, *H. sericea*, as congeners.

It is true that it is no merit to change a name if another has given the reasons for changing it, but the quotation of any name of author behind a combination of names expresses or proposes no acknowledgment of merit at all, but serves only to guide the botanist in his search for information about the species. This is the principle recognized by most European botanists, and it implies the other principle that the quotation of the book where to find information is more important than that of the author of the name.

#### Concerning nomenclature.

I was much surprised when I read in the BOTANICAL GAZETTE (June, 1888, p. 161): "Shall the law of priority apply only to the combined generic and specific name, or to the specific appellation as well?"

If I understand it means a doubt as regards the fixity of a specific name when a species is transferred to another genus.

This point has been clearly considered and settled in the 57th article of our *Laws of Nomenclature*, recommended by the Botanical Congress held at Paris in August, 1867<sup>1</sup>:

"When a species is moved into another genus the specific name is maintained, unless there arises one of the obstacles mentioned in the articles 62 and 63." (If the name exists already in the genus or could lead to some misconception.)

This rule is in conformity with the general principle not to change names without absolute necessity. It has also an advantage, which is to help remembering a species formerly in another genus.

We follow that rule in several cases more or less analogous to our scientific nomenclature. When Mexican cities have been transferred to the United States their names were not changed; when the name of a city is changed, those of the streets are kept; and if *John Brown* discovers that his real family name is *Smith*, he would be *John Smith*.

Allow me to recall that our *rules* were first submitted to a committee of eminent botanists of five different nationalities, afterward discussed in three sittings by more than a hundred members, and finally adopted by universal consent. Since that time I never heard any objection to the fixity of specific names, and if new names are given that are not necessary I would consider them as null.

Geneva, Switzerland.

ALPH. DE CANDOLLE.

#### Polygamous flowers in the watermelon.

One of the characters given for Cucurbitaceæ is "flowers monœcious or diœcious." In making some crosses to-day on the Volga watermelon,

<sup>1</sup>Translated in English. Reeves & Co., London. 1868.